

System Configuration Team Meeting Notes

July 21, 2005

1. ***Greetings and Introductions.***

SCT Chair Bill Hevlin welcomed everyone to today's meeting, held July 21, 2005 at NMFS' Portland, Oregon offices. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at this meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should contact Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420.

2. ***FFDRWG Update.***

No FFDRWG update was presented at today's meeting.

3. ***SRWG Update.***

No SRWG update was provided at today's meeting.

4. ***FY'06 CRFM Program Priorities.***

Hevlin suggested that the SCT spend a few minutes discussing the criteria to be used in prioritizing the FY'06 CRFM program, using the old SCT criteria as a strawman. He distributed a list of strawman criteria objectives, labeled "meant to stimulate ideas and initiate discussion." The high-priority objectives included the following:

- Development of surface passage routes for juvenile passage – normative passage route; increase reach and project survival; reduce cumulative stress and delay, thereby reducing delayed mortality.
- Development of forebay guidance structures – guiding fish to spillway or surface routes offers the potential for greater flexibility in spill and powerhouse operations
- Increase spillway survival and improve the reliability of spillway gates and operations
- Improve adult passage and increase the reliability of aging adult passage systems

- Project survival studies to determine optimum surface bypass, spillway and powerhouse operations. Support for system survival studies, such as PIT recovery in estuary and bird islands
- Development of high flow juvenile tag detection capability for surface, spillway and turbine passage.

Hevlin's list also included the following medium-priority items:

- Estuary studies to determine survival and potential survival improvements
- Transport studies to determine how to improve post-release survival of barged juveniles
- Adult studies to determine the fate of unaccounted fish and the relationship of passage experience to spawning success
- Lamprey studies to determine system and project effects and development of adult passage
- Continue the development of sea lion exclusion gates at Bonneville ladder entrances.

Hevlin's list also included the following lower priorities:

- Increase turbine passage survival
- Increase FGE and bypass system survival
- Flood control study
- Project-specific water temperature control studies
- Project decision documents

Hevlin noted that this new list is more reflective of the current CRFM reality, in terms of the concepts and objectives the region supports. Bruce Suzumoto suggested that, in applying these criteria, it would be beneficial for the SCT to bear in mind the performance standards each action is designed to achieve, given the fact that the 2004 BiOp is in legal flux, currently. We should be looking for actions that have the highest biological benefit, as well as the highest cost-effectiveness, he said. It would help, from an organizational standpoint, if you could quantify how each individual line-item will help you meet a given objective, Suzumoto said.

Kim Fodrea noted that, although the 2004 BiOp is tied up in court, BPA is still operating under the assumption that it still applies. For that reason, she said, it may make sense for us to continue to operate under those directions, in terms of updating these criteria. For instance, she said, we don't have year-three check-ins, so we can throw that out, but continued construction items that are already underway would seem like something we may want to continue to do. Fodrea suggested that the SCT's original guidelines still make sense, but should be updated to reflect current SCT and regional priorities.

John Kranda suggested that the “project decision documents” line-item deserves a higher ranking, because these documents are the vehicles through which informed, project-by-project decisions are made. Shane Scott noted that it is incumbent on the SCT to ensure that whatever priorities are allotted, every dollar goes to the highest and best biological use. I don't hear anyone disagreeing, replied Gary Fredricks, but I would not want to try to tie our decisions to a percent survival improvement. Evaluation is obviously a very important part of everything we do, but I'm not sure we always do a very good job of monitoring the biological effectiveness of what we do.

Russ Kiefer said that, from IDFG's perspective, he does not necessarily agree that direct survival is the only parameter on which the SCT should concentrate its decision-making efforts. If that was true, he said, we would focus only on maximizing transportation, rather than taking into account the “D” value, which also factors in adult return rates. I also heard Shane Scott say that the 2004 UPA provides the best direction, in terms of the latest thought of the region as to what is best to do. There is a definite lack of consensus, regionally, as to whether or not the 2004 UPA is the best we can come up with at this time. That may be the action agencies' perspective, he said, but it is not IDFG's perspective, or the region's. I think you need to acknowledge that there are others that disagree with that approach, and incorporate that into the SCT process, said Kiefer.

Isn't most of the regional disagreement focused on transportation and operations, rather than configuration? Fodrea asked. I'm not sure that's true, said Tom Lorz – for example, the question of which project should receive the next RSW is still outstanding.

We're in the month of July, and we need to have our rankings done by September, Hevlin observed. For that reason, I hope we can reach a consensus on the criteria guiding prioritization at this meeting. The Implementation Team is expecting a presentation on the criteria at their August meeting.

It was agreed to devote a few minutes of discussion to modifying the original SCT decision criteria to reflect updated regional priorities. Kranda suggested that the group add a general goal statement, to the effect that the overall goal of the CRFM program is to optimize passage survival and adult returns at each project in the most cost-effective manner possible.

The SCT offered a variety of minor wording changes to the original SCT prioritization criteria list. It was agreed that, at a macro level, the goal of the CRFM program is to improve juvenile passage survival and adult passage. Other CRFM funds are being spent on studies to determine how best to do that. Ultimately, the final list was worded as follows:

2006 Program SCT Criteria and Guidelines for Prioritization of the CRFM Program (updated 7/21/05):

Priority Level	Criteria Description	Guidelines
High	Congressional adds Construction items underway from FY'05	1) Higher priority for passage alternatives with multi-species, multi-life stage approach, including measures to increase adult returns
	Juvenile Studies and passage improvements with the highest potential survival benefits	2) Higher priority for multi-purpose passage alternatives (for example, an alternative which improves survival and water quality)
	Key system and project evaluations to answer uncertainties for future implementation decisions (includes "D" value and latent mortality)	3) Cost effectiveness should be considered in evaluating priority level.
Medium	Significant adult passage facility and high risk reliability issues (for example: fallback, ladder temperature, holding)	
	Juvenile studies and passage improvements with highest potential survival benefits (including incremental gas abatement and temperature measures)	
	Less significant adult passage facility issues	
	Adult migration, unaccounted loss, spawning success studies	
	Studies to determine system and project effects on unlisted species of concern (e.g.: lamprey)	
Low	Juvenile and adult evaluations and passage improvements with	

	relatively lower expected survival improvements	
	Lower risk adult facility reliability issues	
	Other measures	

Hevlin noted that, as has been the case in years past, the salmon manager and the federal agency subgroups will rank each spreadsheet item from 1 to 5 (5 being the highest) over the next month. The numbers will then be tallied and a numerical rank assigned to each line-item. It was further agreed that the next iteration of the CRFM spreadsheet will include a column for the rankings of each SCT member agency – NMFS, BPA, IDFG, WDFW, USFWS etc. We'll talk about the tallied scores during the August SCT meeting, Hevlin said.

5. *Review and Discussion of COE Report on Surface Bypass Alternatives.*

Mark Lindgren led this presentation, noting that the Corps NWD has put together a surface bypass team to develop a regional strategy for planning and implementing normative in-river surface-oriented fish passage measures for the Corps projects on the Lower Snake and Columbia Rivers. Lindgren touched on the following topics:

- The make-up of the team: COE Portland and Walla Walla Districts, the NWD Fish Office, multi-discipline project managers, biologists and hydraulic engineers
- Key plan objectives – clearly-defined management objectives and decision criteria, implementation plan consistent with available dollars, plan considers cost effectiveness and other important variables, resource agency participation in each step of the decision process
- Key concerns: needs to be consistent in the context of an overall configuration and operational scenario for each dam; must consider all related surface bypass information; must provide appropriate justification and documentation of decisions; needs to provide flexibility in operation
- Decision and implementation strategy documentation: configuration and operations document, detailed decision report, plans and specifications, post-construction evaluation, final reporting for operation implementation
- Regional coordination: draft report to agencies due July 29; review meeting with agencies set for August 9 in Portland; SCT meeting August 18; IT meeting in early September; status briefing to Power Planning Council in mid-September.

There will also be an opportunity to provide regional input prior to the Walla Walla FFDRWG meeting on August 10-11, possibly by scheduling a pre-meeting here in Portland. It was so agreed.

6. *Receipt of FY'06 CRFM Workplans for Review.*

As requested at a previous SCT meeting, Kranda distributed copies of the 2006 one-page research summaries, titled "2006Project List." He noted that a few plans have yet to come in, but will be distributed as soon as they arrive. He invited the SCT to use these plans in their deliberations on the FY'06 CRFM program.

7. *Next SCT Meeting Date.*

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Thursday, August 18. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.